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FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4415  
INFO RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0771  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 0173  
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA 0140  
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 1783

S E C R E T PORT MORESBY 000170

SIPDIS

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FOR EAP/ANP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/19/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [CASC](#) [BP](#)  
SUBJECT: VIOLENCE CONTINUES IN HONIARA

REF: PORT MORESBY 169

CLASSIFIED BY: Robert Fitts, Ambassador, AMB, STATE.  
REASON: 1.4 (b)

1.(S)SUMMARY: Though violence subsided somewhat over the night, groups of youths still are on the loose and out of police control. There has been extensive damage to Chinese businesses and a number of police have been injured. Businesses and government offices are closed. The Australians appear ready to send in forces from their ready reaction company.

2.(SBU) There have been no reports of disturbances outside of the capital city. We are working with SS-0 to put out a warden notice advising Americans in Honiara to remain indoors. END  
SUMMARY

3.(SBU) Though the situation remains confused, it appears that roughly 300 supporters of Charles Dausebea began the riot on 18 April when Snyder Rini was elected Prime Minister. They claimed he had won office on the back of Taiwanese money. Other groups of disaffected toughs joined in and began attacking Chinese (Taiwanese) affiliated businesses. The totals involved may be 1000 split into three roving groups. Much of Chinatown has been burned and looted as well as the ground floor of the Casino Hotel. On the morning of 19 April, we received reports that the groups were now threatening the Honiara Hotel which is owned by the (ethnic Chinese) major backer of the Rini coalition ( who is also the father of Foreign Minister Laurie Chan).

4.(C) The Solomon Island police, including their Australian-New Zealand RAMSI members, have not yet been able to bring the situation under control. There are press reports that eight RAMSI officers were injured on the 18th. We understand that the number has now grown and that at least two are seriously injured. All injuries are from large rocks hurled by the crowd. There have been no reports of any other weapons.

5.(S) We understand that the Australians are preparing to make the decision to commit their Ready Response Unit, a company kept on alert in Townsville about 2 = hours flight from Honiara. This would be an expected step. The unit was committed also some 18 months ago when a RAMSI officer was murdered. The move is made more probable as the military backup now in the Solomons is a platoon from Fiji. RAMSI officers have long considered the Fijians to be the least reliable unit available. They were especially concerned with an earlier tendency for the Fijian troops to fraternize and become involved in local disputes.

6.(U) Embassy is working with SS-0 on a warden notice advising Americans in Honiara to remain indoors unless absolutely necessary. There are roughly 70 Americans in Honiara. We have no reports of any incidents outside of Honiara and no reports of

any threat to foreigners except for Chinese. However, we will advise that all unnecessary travel to Solomon Islands be curtailed pending developments. The U.S. Consular agent, who was on Easter vacation, will return to Solomon Islands this afternoon.

7.(C) COMMENT: RAMSI's arrival in July 2003 put an immediate end to the ethnic violence that had plagued the country for three years. Never-the-less, tensions remained under the surface, particularly among the young toughs that had enjoyed free rein during the troubles. Events of the last two days make clear that, despite three years of hard work and much expense by Australia and New Zealand, the situation in Solomon Islands would quickly revert should RAMSI be removed. We believe that the lid will probably be back on soon, particularly if military forces are committed. However, RAMSI will likely face a more difficult day-to-day task in the future. Having once again taken the streets, Honiara's young ethnic toughs will probably remain ready for any other opportunity and political opportunists will be more ready to use them. Outside intervention in Solomon Islands may be needed for a long time to come.

FITTS